ideal of what trade agreements ought to be like, I think they have chosen the wrong tent pole.

Here is what is happening with trade. This is what the Washington Post is supporting: an avalanche of red ink, dramatic trade deficits, which means we have shipped American jobs overseas. I believe we have begun to undermine this country's economy.

With respect to automobile trade and Korea and this agreement, let me say we have already negotiated two agreements with Korea in the 1990s. They have not abided by either of them. They say: Yes, yes, yes. They sign up for the agreement, and they do not do anything with respect to the enforcement.

Here is what we have with Korea. Last year, they sent us 730,000 Korean cars to be sold in the United States. Guess what. We were able to sell 4,000 cars in Korea. Let me say that again. They shipped 730,000 cars to be sold here. We were able to sell 4,000 cars in Korea.

Fair trade? I don't think so. Ninety-nine percent of the cars driving on the streets of Korea are Korean-made because that is the way they want it. That is the way they will keep it. Go read the story about the Dodge Dakota pickup that we tried to sell in Korea, and how the Korean government blocked that. You will know all you need to know about Korea auto trade.

So when the Washington Post criticizes Senator CLINTON for standing up for this country's economic interests, I think it is a curious kind of thing for the Washington Post to do.

This issue of trade is about jobs, real jobs. And the people who have those jobs are the people who know about second shifts, second jobs, second mortgages. They are American workers trying to make a go of it in a global economy, supported by the Washington Post, that puts downward pressure on their wages, and says let's sign up for any trade agreement, even if it is unfair to this country's economic interests.

A group of us proposed that we do benchmarks with trade agreements. Let's find out whether there is the kind of benchmark and accountability that will meet the test of progress on the other side with respect to trade agreements. But this administration opposes that as well.

The reason I wanted to take the floor today was to talk about the Korean free-trade agreement. We could talk about most others, as well, but the editorial this morning criticizing Senator CLINTON is unbelievable, and deals with the Korean deal.

This is the weakest possible point the Washington Post could make, or those who support these trade agreements could make. The Koreans send us 700,000 cars. They will allow only 4,000 of ours into their marketplace. That is fair trade? So they say, let's sign up for a third agreement with them. How many bitter lessons do we have to learn? What about accountability? What about benchmarks? Why won't this administration agree to benchmarks on trade agreements so that we can see whether we really are standing up for this country's economic interests?

Mr. President, in my judgment, it is not just the Washington Post but so many others here I think are experiencing a triumph of hope over real experience when they support trade agreements that we know to be bad agreements from this country's economic standpoint.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from New Jersey.

ENERGY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, as a member of the Energy Committee, I know a tremendous amount of work has been put into making this a strong energy package that will help us achieve energy self-reliance, lower gas prices, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Under Democratic leadership, we are headed into a new cleaner, greener, and more affordable energy future, one where we do not seek to treat our addiction to oil by drilling for yet more oil in the Arctic or off the east coast. This bill represents a bold step forward toward an economy that is based upon energy efficiency and renewable rather than fossil fuels.

I do believe, however, that there are a few key amendments that will make this good bill even better. The most important of these is Chairman BINGAMAN's renewable portfolio standard amendment, requiring that 15 percent of the Nation's electricity be produced from renewable sources by 2020. This forward-thinking provision is a declaration that our country is ready to be a renewable energy leader.

I often hear in the Halls of Congress that energy is a regional issue. If you represent a cold State, you probably support one set of policies; if your State grows corn or drills for oil, you support other policies.

I understand the passionate advocacy one must undertake on behalf of one's home State. But energy can no longer be viewed as a parochial issue that only affects local interests. We in the Senate have a responsibility to ensure that our local interests do not jeopardize the Nation's interests as a whole, nor can we stand in the way of this great Nation becoming a global leader on what has become a global issue.

For most of the past two centuries, this country has been blessed with an abundant supply of domestic energy, bountiful enough to provide us with all of the heat and power we have needed. But for the last 40 years we have increasingly had to look abroad to secure supplies of oil. This quest to feed our seemingly insatiable appetite for oil has unquestionably shaped our foreign policy.

We pay the price for our oil habit when a corrupt regime such as Iran feels emboldened to threaten its neighbors with nuclear weapons, and do so with impunity because their access to oil makes it possible for them to buy influence around the globe.

As New York Times columnist Tom Friedman has pointed out, it is not a coincidence that when oil was $20 a barrel, both Russia and Iran launched internal reform programs to increase democratic participation. As the price of oil has soared past $70 a barrel, both of those countries have reversed course and used their burgeoning treasuries to stifle dissent and roll back democratic progress.

The same story can be told across the world, from the corrupt royal governments and pseudo-theocracies of the Middle East, to the iron-fisted dictators who hold sway in the former Soviet countries in Central Asia, to the petro-populism of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Many of the countries that sit on the largest reserves of oil are the same countries that are now resisting reform and creating global instability.

If the story of the 20th century was of a tidal wave of democracy sweeping across the globe, the emerging story of the 21st century is of that wave being swallowed underneath a floor of crude. As long as there are tyrants who have the lucky fortune to sit on top of massive oil reserves and prop up their regimes through huge petroleum profits, there will be no reform. Finding alternatives to oil is a key to democratic, economic, and social reform in much of the world.

In response to this energy security challenge, some of my friends and colleagues will undoubtedly advocate Federal support for efforts to support a liquid fuel from coal. They point out that we have an abundant supply of coal, that we are the ''Saudi Arabia'' of coal. This line of thought ignores the threat of global warming.

The lifecycle emissions of liquid fuel made from coal are over twice that of gasoline. If we substitute oil for coal, a fuel that releases even more greenhouse gasses than oil, we are setting our planet up for disaster. Global warming is happening. It is caused by human activities. It is threatening our very existence.

Recently, the New Jersey Research and Policy Center catalogued the impacts of global warming in my State over the next century. If we do not act quickly and decisively, Cape May Beach will erode between 160 to 500 feet inland. The Holland Tunnel will be forced to close due to repeated floods. Heat-related deaths in our cities will rise fivefold, and flooding along the Delaware River will cause millions of dollars in property damage.

Similar devastating impacts will be seen all over the world. Floods will require the evacuation of millions in India and Bangladesh. East Asia will experience increased water shortages. Central Africa will see ever worsening drought conditions. Warmer ocean surface temperatures will lead to stronger hurricanes and cyclones.

In order to address our energy challenges, we must keep these worldwide impacts in mind, but that does not mean we should not act locally to achieve our national goals. Just this past weekend, the Washington Post ran an article with the headline, ''Cities Take Lead on Environment As Debate Drags at Federal Level.''

The article detailed the actions that mayors have taken to fill the void left by the President's lack of leadership on climate change. Hundreds of mayors have created energy efficiency projects, promoted renewable energy, and vowed to meet the greenhouse gas reductions laid out in the Kyoto Protocol.

To foster this local spirit in our cities to tackle climate change, I, along with Senator SANDERS, have included a provision in this bill to create an energy and environmental block grant program. This program will allow cities and counties to get Federal grants to make their buildings more efficient, create new renewable energy projects, and continue their leadership in reducing U.S. carbon emissions.

Mr. President, not only does the Clean Energy Act of 2007 lower greenhouse gas emissions and help us achieve energy self-reliance, but the bill also promises to reduce prices at the pump. First, the bill creates real competition for oil by increasing the production of renewable biofuels from 8.5 billion gallons per year in 2008 to 36 billion gallons per year by 2022.

Second, the bill lowers the demand for oil by requiring the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to achieve a nationwide fleet fuel economy of 35 miles per gallon by 2020 for passenger cars and light trucks.

Third, the bill expands the Federal research into plug-in hybrid technology so that electricity can compete against liquid fuels as a power source for our vehicles.

Finally, by cracking down on price gouging, the bill will ensure that oil companies cannot drive up costs without justification. For too long companies have been allowed to squeeze motorists for record profits without economic justification. This bill will make oil markets more transparent and institute tougher civil and criminal penalties for market manipulation.

Taken together, these measures will create more supply, put downward pressure on demand, and create a more competitive marketplace. In turn, this will lead to drastically lower prices for all drivers.

Mr. President, in closing, each of us comes to the Senate as a representative of our respective State, but our responsibilities do not end at our State's borders. As national leaders, we also have a responsibility to come together and address issues such as our global energy challenges.

When it comes to these issues, whether it is national security or global climate change, we must rise above local interests and show national leadership. Then, and only then will we be able to effect change that benefits consumers, improves our energy security, and establishes the United States as a leader in the fight against global warming.

I salute Senator BINGAMAN and Senator DOMENICI in this effort. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the very important bill before us. Like the Senator from New Jersey, I serve on the Energy Committee. It has been my pleasure to work with the chairman and ranking member to discuss the problems we have in our country and the State of Florida with energy, the fact that it is such an essential ingredient in our daily lives. It needs more help. It needs reform, and Congress needs to address it.

As we move forward in shaping the policies that guide our Nation in securing domestic, stable, and affordable sources of energy, we must remember that everything we do here will have a direct impact on every American who drives a car, turns on a light, or takes a sip of water. Gas prices are hovering around historic highs. Energy bills are climbing. Over the last 5 months, gas prices have risen almost 50 percent. That is the one place where all Americans have to, at some point during the week, make a stop, as with the grocery store. If prices have gone up 50 percent over the last 5 months, imagine what that does to a family on a budget trying to make ends meet, trying to send children to school, trying to live on a fixed income—retire, perhaps—members of our military. This cuts across all people evenly. Energy bills are climbing for all Americans. There is increased concern over the impact our energy production has on our environment, and rightly so.

I am glad we are talking about this important issue because it is a vehicle we can use to address all three of these pressing concerns. But in this bill, there are areas where we can do more, areas we can improve to help shape the long-term outlook for domestic energy production.

In the area of gas prices, this bill does nothing to remove the barriers to refineries. Total U.S. demand for oil is about 22 million barrels per day. Right now, we have domestic refinery capacity here in the United States to produce about 17 million barrels a day. That means we have to import at least 5 million barrels of refined products every day just to meet our current deficit. But the problem is, our needs are growing and refinery capacity is static or shrinking. We need more refineries and more refinery capacity. But the fact is, we have not built a refinery in the United States in 30 years because of burdensome overregulation.

Under the current system, there is no incentive for companies to take the risk or make the investment in a process that in all likelihood will result in rejection. This is something this bill should address. We know the problem. We know the solution. All we need now is a commitment to do something about it. Until we address the refinery capacity and petroleum infrastructure problems, there will be no relief for this problem, for the ever-rising prices of gasoline for American consumers at the pump. Until we address refinery capacity, this bill will not be complete.

This bill attempts to address supposed price gouging at the pump. I think I speak for all my colleagues when I say we oppose price gouging and we should encourage vigorous prosecution of unscrupulous business practices. We should do all we can to see it doesn't happen and those who engage in that are punished. But study after study and investigation after investigation have shown that widespread price gouging is not happening. That is not the problem. After the devastating hurricanes of 2005, I joined my colleagues on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to ask the Federal Trade Commission if there was any sort of collusion among the oil and gas industry to drive up prices. Once again, the FTC found no evidence of price gouging or of collusion.

Until we address the capacity of our refineries to produce more gas, the supply will be limited. Basic economics says if demand is high and supply is low, you are going to pay a premium at the pump. Gas prices are hurting Americans. We are looking at historic highs. Pick up a gas pump and open your wallet. Does this bill address that? No. This doesn't add any more production. This doesn't reduce inefficiencies. Instead, this bill mandates alternative fuels without removing cost barriers. We will still have a 54-cents-a-gallon tariff on Brazilian ethanol. That is fuel which could be flowing today in Florida and throughout our country. That is fuel which could increase supply, reduce the price at the pump, and have an impact on prices tomorrow. It is part of what this bill should address. We need to look at whether, in fact, it is prudent, at a time when we are trying to increase ethanol consumption, for us to put a tax on the import of ethanol from Brazil.

Another area of this bill where we could make improvements is by adding incentives to promote the production of nuclear energy. If we are looking for a clean, reliable, stable, and affordable energy supply, look no further than nuclear energy. In my State, we have five nuclear units generating roughly 15 percent of our energy needs. We need more of that kind of power generation. In the time since we ordered our last nuclear reactor in the 1970s, France has embraced nuclear energy. Now their country is 80 percent nuclear. They get it. They are using it. They are recycling the waste to generate even more power. If we are looking for a renewable, clean, and stable source of energy, there is one. But instead of promoting nuclear energy, this bill is silent. Instead of giving Floridians relief from the costs associated with storing the waste at our facilities, we are faced with mounting bills.

Florida ratepayers have already paid $1.2 billion to move waste to Yucca Mountain, but it currently remains stored in Florida. It is sitting at the powerplants. This money, intended to store nuclear waste in Nevada, is costing Floridians money every month in every electric bill. It is costing us the money that should have been spent on producing more energy, on finding ways of bringing down the costs.

Under the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act, we were supposed to be sending this waste to Yucca Mountain starting in 1998. We have let politics prevent us from embracing the promise of nuclear power. If we are serious about promoting the production of clean energy, we had better do what we promised Florida ratepayers and others around the Nation, that we open the central repository in Nevada.

We have enough coal to meet our energy needs for 200 years, and very little in this bill addresses that fact. States such as Kentucky, Montana, and Wyoming are rich in resources and ready to bring those resources to meet our growing fuel demands. As a Senator from Florida, I would much rather be digging for coal in Montana or Kentucky than drilling for oil on the beaches of Florida.

The Bingaman 15 percent RPS amendment is one of the amendments I encourage my colleagues to oppose. For Florida ratepayers who have embraced nuclear energy as a way to help reduce pollution, by 2030, the Bingaman amendment will have a cost of $21 billion. I don't know how many people in Florida think their energy bills are too low, but I can't imagine that they are willing to start subsidizing wind farms in North Dakota. Florida property taxes are already sky high. Our property taxes, our insurance costs are even higher. The last thing Floridians want is a $21 billion increase in their power bill. Break that down, and that is a rate increase of about $2,500 per household. That is more than a year's tuition at the University of Florida. That is more than a family on a fixed income might spend in a year for any type of recreational activity. Florida doesn't have the resources or the capacity to meet the arbitrary definitions or demands of the Bingaman amendment. We will take a big financial hit if it passes.

In the next 10 years, Florida's energy demands are expected to grow 60 percent. We need reliable, affordable, abundant, clean-burning energy to meet our demands. Disincentives like the renewable portfolio standard amendment don't provide power to the State of Florida. They don't help Florida meet its needs for seniors, veterans, working families, and those on fixed incomes.

This bill regulates and mandates, but where is the bill streamlining? Where is the redtape being reduced? Where are the incentives for States such as Florida to build upon those power sources which we have already found to be clean and successful?

A bright future for America and our economy depends on energy. We need it to run our homes, computers, cars, our entire way of life. Right now, we have a reliance on foreign sources of energy that is unhealthy. To get away from foreign sources of energy, we need to make the hard decisions today to give us a better tomorrow. That is certainly the case with our energy policy. Domestic solutions include nuclear, clean coal, biofuels, increased production of oil and natural gas. Obviously, conservation needs to be a cornerstone of what we do.

In Florida, we rejected oil and natural gas drilling off our coast in favor of pursuing alternatives, including expanding production in some of the deepest regions of the Outer Continental Shelf, opening 8.3 million acres for production. We are also studying new sources of energy. We are making great strides in biofuels research and development. We are working through public and private partnerships to harness the power of cellulosic ethanol and find ways to more efficiently turn orange rinds and sugar cane into energy. These are the ideas. These are the innovations we need to pursue in our natural energy policy. We need to reward States that are pursuing smart strategies. We need to stay away from penalizing those that don't have the resources to meet arbitrary and unrealistic benchmarks. We need an energy policy for the long haul.

I am hopeful we can do that, but we still have a lot more work to do.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I listened to the conversation that has gone on this morning. I have to say I am a little bit disappointed in some of the negative comments about our country. I always thought you had to be an ultimate optimist to serve in this body. Things go slowly, which is probably fortunate, but we just can't keep trying to make ourselves look better by running down our country. I often remind people that I am not aware of anybody trying to get out of our country, but from the past 2 weeks' discussion, I know there are a lot of people trying to get in.

I will cite an article from the Wall Street Journal of Wednesday, May 23, 2007, that says, ''The Poor Get Richer.'' It reads:

It's been a rough week for John Edwards, and now comes more bad news for his ''two Americas'' campaign theme. A new study by the Congressional Budget Office says the poor have been getting less poor. On average, CBO found that low-wage households with children had incomes after inflation that were more than one-third higher in 2005 than in 1991.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, May 23, 2007]

THE POOR GET RICHER

It's been a rough week for John Edwards, and now come more bad news for his ''two Americas'' campaign theme. A new study by the Congressional Budget Office says the poor have been getting less poor. On average, CBO found that low-wage households with children had incomes after inflation that were more than one-third higher in 2005 than in 1991.

The CBO results don't fit the prevailing media stereotype of the U.S. economy as a richer take all affair—which may explain why you haven't read about them. Among all families with children, the poorest fifth had the fastest overall earnings growth over the 15 years measured. (See the nearby chart.) The poorest even had higher earnings growth than the richest 20%. The earnings of these poor households are about 80% higher today than in the early 1990s.

What happened? CBO says the main causes of this low-income earnings surge have been a combination of welfare reform, expansion of the earned income tax credit and wage gains from a tight labor market, especially in the late stages of the 1990s expansion. Though cash welfare fell as a share of overall income (which includes government benefits), earnings from work climbed sharply as the 1996 welfare reform pushed at least one family breadwinner into the job market.

Earnings growth tapered off as the economy slowed in the early part of this decade, but earnings for low-income families have still nearly doubled in the years since welfare reform became law. Some two million welfare mothers have left the dole for jobs since the mid-1990s. Far from being a disaster for the poor, as most on the left claimed when it was debated, welfare reform has proven to be a boon.

The report also rebuts the claim, fashionable in some precincts on CNN, that the middle class is losing ground. The median family with children saw an 18% rise in earnings from the early 1990s through 2005. That's $8,500 more purchasing power after inflation. The wealthiest fifth made a 55% gain in earnings, but the key point is that every class saw significant gains in income.

There's a lot of income mobility in America, so comparing poor families today with the poor families of 10 years ago can be misleading because they're not the same families. Every year hundreds of thousands of new immigrants and the young enter the workforce at ''poor'' income levels. But the CBO study found that, with the exception of chronically poor families who have no breadwinner, low-income job holders are climbing the income ladder.

When CBO examined surveys of the same poor families over a two year period, 2001–2003, it found that ''the average income for those households increased by nearly 45%.'' That's especially impressive considering that those were two of the weakest years for economic growth across the 15 years of the larger study.

One argument was whether welfare reform would help or hurt households headed by women. Well, CBO finds that female-headed poor households saw their incomes double from 1991 to 2005, and the percentage of that